

**Thomas Jefferson to James Monroe, June 2, 1802, from
The Works of Thomas Jefferson in Twelve Volumes.
Federal Edition. Collected and Edited by Paul Leicester
Ford.**

TO THE GOVERNOR OF VIRGINIA J. MSS. (JAMES MONROE.)

Washington, June 2, 1802.

Dear Sir, —I observe that the resolution of the legislature of Virginia of Jan. 23 in desiring us to look out for some proper place to which insurgent negroes may be sent, expresses a preference of the continent of Africa, or some of the Spanish or Portuguese settlements in S. America: in which preference, and especially as to the former, I entirely concur. On looking towards Africa for our objects the British establishment at Sierra Leone at once presents itself. You know that that establishment was undertaken by a private company and was first suggested by the suffering state of the blacks, who were carried over to England during the revolutionary war, and who were perishing [*illegible*] and misery in the streets of London. A number of benevolent persons subscribed for the establishment of a company who might carry these people to the coast of Africa, and there employ them usefully for themselves, and indemnify the company by commercial operations: Sierra Leone was fixed on as the place, the blacks then in England were carried thither, and a vessel or vessels sent to Nova Scotia which carried to the same place the blacks who had gone to that country. The settlement is consequently composed of negroes formerly inhabitants of the southern states of our union. Having asked a conversation on this subject with Mr. Thornton the British chargé des affaires here, he informs me the establishment is prosperous, and he thinks there will be no objection on the part of the company to receive blacks from us, not of the character of common felons,

Library of Congress

but guilty of insurgency only, provided they are sent as free persons, the principles of their institution admitting no slavery among them. I propose therefore, if it meets your approbation, to write to Mr. King our minister in London to propose this matter to the Sierre Leone company who are resident in London; and if leave can be obtained to send black insurgents there, to inquire further whether the regulations of the place would permit us to carry or take there any mercantile objects which by affording some commercial profit, might defray the expenses of the transportation. As soon as I can be fa-

vored with your sentiments on this proposition and your approbation of it I will write to Mr. King that we may have the matter finally arranged. Should any mercantile operation be permitted to be combined with the transportation of these persons, so as to lessen or to pay the expense, it might then become eligible to make that the asylum for the other description also, to wit, the freed slaves and persons of color. If not permitted, so distant a colonization of them would perhaps be thought too expensive. But while we are ascertaining this point, we may be making inquiry what other suitable places may be found in the West Indies, or the southern continent of America, so as to have some other resource provided if the one most desirable should be unattainable. In looking out for another place we should prefer placing them with whatever power is least likely to become an enemy, and to use the knowledge of these exiles in predatory expeditions against us. Portugal and Holland would be of this character. But I wish to have your sentiments on both branches of the subject before I commit it by any actual step. Accept assurances of my affectionate and high esteem & respect.